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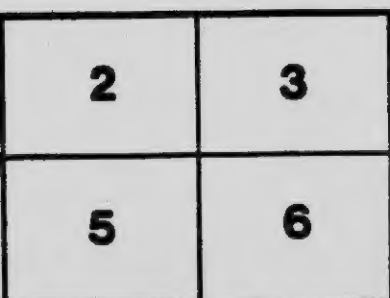
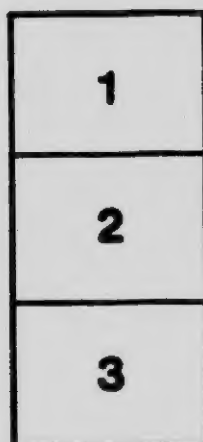
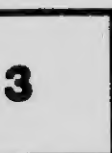
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COMPARATIVE RELIGION
ITS ORIGIN AND OUTLOOK

A LECTURE

BY

LOUIS HENRY JORDAN, B.D.

MEMBER OF THE INSTITUT ETHNOGRAPHIQUE INTERNATIONAL, PARIS
AUTHOR OF 'COMPARATIVE RELIGION: ITS ORIGINS AND GROWTH,' ETC. ETC.

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FOREWORD

The following sketch was offered, six weeks ago, to a comparatively small audience in London. Yet the listeners consisted of thoughtful and scholarly men—proverbially critical and outspoken, though by no means unsympathetic towards the claims and sanctions of religion—whose very presence afforded the lecturer a constant stimulus during the performance of his task.

The paper having been read and discussed, the wish was unanimously expressed that it should be published.

In complying with this suggestion, subsequently renewed, the author claims the right of stating that his personal preference in the matter has been overborne. Still, should this pamphlet serve in any small measure to fan afresh the flame of a visibly growing interest in a profoundly important study, it will have served a worthy and timely purpose.

The outline here presented appears as it was originally drafted, save that, through the addition of footnotes, its value has been considerably increased. A somewhat fuller treatment has been given, moreover, to two books which have just been published, the one by Professor Jevons of Durham and the other by Principal Carpenter of Oxford. It is a wholly unique event that, within a single year, and actually within a few days of each other, two treatises on this subject, prepared by two representative teachers, should have been completed and issued. May this happy synchronism prove the augury of an entirely new epoch in the history of this study, so vital for the spiritual growth of all enlightened believers, while so absorbing and interpretative in the experience of literally every student who comes within its influence.

EASTBOURNE,
May 1, 1913.

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

It is an arresting fact that, within the brief space of ten days, two books published in England have appeared bearing the simple title 'Comparative Religion'. This coincidence awakens many reflections. It suggests, first of all, a brief historical retrospect.

I

The late Professor Max Müller, by his researches in Philology and Mythology, will always occupy a foremost place among the founders and early promoters of the Science of Religion. He was not fortunate enough to be in a position to lend much help to Comparative Religion, partly because the times were not yet theologically ripe for the introduction of that study, and partly because numerous necessary investigations in Anthropology, Ethnology, Sociology, &c., were still merely in their initial stages. Nevertheless, this distinguished Oxford scholar did much to prepare the way for the advent of an additional department of research, and to render its arrival inevitable.

Professor Max Müller died in the year 1900; but, fully a decade prior to that date, distinguished investigators in different countries had begun to manifest an interest in this new study, while beginners were eagerly clamouring for an authoritative exposition of its principles and aims. In view of the huge dimensions of the field, the extraordinary complexity of the subject-matter, the influence it seemed bound to exert upon current religious belief and teaching, its continued absence from all programmes of academic instruction, the silence (or merely perfunctory explanations) of the encyclopaedias one consulted, and the contradictory manner in which the bearings of Comparative Religion were interpreted in different quarters, the demand for fuller and reliable information upon the subject was not only quite reasonable, but it has become during the interval more and more insistent every year.

II

It must not be overlooked that, since Professor Max Müller's day, numerous attempts have been made to meet and satisfy this need. Lack of space forbids one to pause and characterize (a) various publications offered in the form of single lectures or other brief monographs,¹

¹ Cp. P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Die vergleichende Religionsforschung und der religiöse Glaube*. Freiburg i. B., 1898; J. Estlin Carpenter, *A Century of Comparati*

or (b) books which have dealt only with some selected general topic,¹ or (c) books which, setting up Christianity as the norm of comparison, have thereafter contrasted (unfavourably) all other religions with it.² One may single out however, for special mention, at least two printed courses of University lectures. The earlier of these volumes we owe to Dr. Trever,³ and the other to Professor Geden.⁴ The former book is vivid and discriminative in touch and detail, and beyond question it is fitted to quicken an enlarging interest in its theme; but, at the best, it is sketchy and inadequate. In particular, it fails to lay emphasis upon the facts that really matter, while it pushes events of subordinate worth into a position of quite undue prominence. Hence, at times, the picture becomes distorted and misleading. Professor Geden's book, although limited in its range—the religions of India (Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism) are dealt with in a subsequent volume,⁵ but the religions of China and Japan are omitted altogether—has proved a very serviceable manual. It is packed with information conveniently arranged. It is however, for the most part, descriptive and historical (rather than critical and comparative) in the exposition which it supplies.

The first real attempt to meet a growingly urgent demand was made by an American scholar, the late Dr. Kellogg.⁶ The purpose of this writer was disinterested and altogether praiseworthy; but unfortunately he restricted his survey, almost exclusively, to the material proper to Comparative Theology. Inasmuch, moreover, as this book was written from the standpoint of an ardent Christian missionary, it failed to achieve the end it had in view. Subsequently, the endowment of University chairs, the creation of Schools of Religion⁷ and

Religion. London, 1900; Cornelis P. Tiele, *Grondzüge der Religionswissenschaft*. Tübingen, 1904; Hermann Oldenberg, *Indien und die Religionswissenschaft*. Stuttgart, 1906; Louis H. Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Method and Scope*. Oxford, 1908; Raffaele Pettazzoni, *La Scienza delle Religioni e il suo Metodo*. Bologna, 1913.

¹ Cp. John M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*. *Studies in Comparative Hierology*. London, 1903. [2nd Ed., 1911]; W. St. Clair Tisdall, *Mythic Christs and the True*. London, 1909.

² Cp. Frank B. Jevons, *An Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion*. (The Hartford-Lamson Lectures, 1907.) New York, 1908; W. St. Clair Tisdall, *Christianity and Other Faiths*. London, 1912; Joseph Huby, *Christus*. *Manuel d'Histoire des Religions*. Paris, 1912.

³ Cp. George H. Trever, *Studies in Comparative Theology*. (Lawrence University, Wisconsin.) New York, 1897.

⁴ Cp. Alfred S. Geden, *Studies in Comparative Religion*. (Wesleyan College, Richmond, University of London.) London, 1898.

⁵ Cp. *Studies in Eastern Religions*. London, 1900. Dr. Geden will shortly issue these two books, enlarged and thoroughly revised, in a single volume entitled *Studies in the Religions of the East*. London, 1913.

⁶ Cp. Samuel H. Kellogg, *A Handbook of Comparative Religion*. (The Westminster Handbooks.) Philadelphia, 1899.

⁷ Cp. the remarkable expansion now taking place in the equipment of the

Schools of Missions,¹ and the well-known courses of lectures delivered in India and in the United States on the Haskell Foundations, have greatly increased the debt the world owes in this connexion to American initiative and American scholarship.²

The earliest British undertaking of this sort, seriously conceived, was the volume recently published by Dr. MacCulloch.³ As the title of the book indicates, no attempt was made to cover more than a portion of the field for which Comparative Religion is responsible. Within its limits this exposition was altogether admirable. During the same year, 'A General Survey of Comparative Religion' was prepared, and afterwards delivered as a special course of lectures at the University of Chicago. In it a sketch was given of the origin, history, and aims of this study; its relationship to a large and important group of subsidiary sciences was briefly delineated; its bibliography was outlined, in so far as the beginnings of a distinctive literature could be traced in scattered suggestions, occasional pamphlets, and a considerable number of volumes; in a word, the way was opened up for a subsequent thorough and systematic exposition of the whole subject. A portion of these lectures, in an expanded form, was afterwards published in an initial volume.⁴ The following year there appeared the First Section of a triennial publication in which the chief literature of this study is now registered, and briefly estimated, from time to time.⁵ The founding of a lectureship at Oxford,⁶ and the issue of a brief textbook by a constant explorer in this field⁷—not to refer in detail to the splendid results accomplished during a score of years by Professor Rhys Davids and Principal Carpenter—mark the steadily growing impor-

Divinity School of Yale University, especially in the Department allotted to the History and Philosophy of Religion.

¹ Cp. the Hartford School of Missions, established by the authorities of the Theological Seminary of Hartford, Conn. Abundant funds are available (1) for promoting scholarly research in the History and Comparison of Religions, and (2) for the special training of Christian missionaries.

² Cp. John H. Barrows, *Christianity: The World Religion*. (Barrows' Lectures, 1896-7.) Chicago, 1897; Charles C. Hall, *Christian Belief Interpreted by Christian Experience*. (Barrows' Lectures, 1902-3.) Chicago, 1905; Duncan B. Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life of Islam*. (Haskell Lectures, 1906.) Chicago, 1909.

³ Cp. John A. MacCulloch, *Comparative Theology*. (The Churchman's Library.) London, 1902.

⁴ Cp. Louis H. Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth*. Edinburgh, 1905. A second volume, entitled *Comparative Religion: Its Meaning and Value*, remains temporarily unpublished for a reason which is specified on p. 10.

⁵ Cp. Louis H. Jordan, *Comparative Religion: A Survey of its Recent Literature*. Three Sections have been published. Edinburgh, 1906. (In progress.)

⁶ Cp. Lewis R. Farnell, *Greece and Babylon*. (Wilde Lectureship in Natural and Comparative Religion, 1909-11.) Edinburgh, 1911; Clement C. J. Webb (the same Lectureship, 1912-14.) (In progress.)

⁷ Cp. W. St. Clair Tisdall, *Comparative Religion*. (Anglican Church Handbooks.) London, 1909.

tance of the subject in the estimation of British scholars, both within the Universities and beyond them.

In the meantime, in spite of a prolonged aloofness, Germany found two courageous pioneers in Dr. Hardy and Dr. Achelis. The former prepared a very suggestive series of articles for the opening volume of a leading scientific review.¹ The latter was not able to accomplish very much in the primer which he issued, since he had to confine himself within the limits of one hundred and fifty pages;² but less was required, ten years ago, than is expected and demanded to-day. As events have demonstrated, this slim and unpretentious book secured several useful ends. While necessarily much hampered in the curtailed presentation of its subject, it was scholarly and comprehensive in a very worthy degree. More substantial and ambitious volumes by which it has recently been followed³ have not always exhibited so fully that detachment and conscientiousness which characterize the work of the scientific inquirer to-day. The action just taken by the Universities of Berlin and Leipzig, in accordance with which chairs for giving instruction in the History of Religions have now been established, makes it certain that the interests of Comparative Religion also will soon be placed in Germany under competent and progressive control.

Italy and France likewise, and Holland in a most praiseworthy way, have made notable contributions to the widening of intellectual horizons in this important field. Although distinguished especially for research in the History of Religions, the assistance these countries have already rendered within the domain of Comparative Religion has proved stimulating and permanently valuable in a very high degree.⁴

III

It must be remembered, yet further, that—in addition to the practical achievements just specified, including the preparation of a number of more or less satisfactory handbooks—several projects have long been under consideration, the ultimate aim of which has been the publication of a really scientific and adequate manual. But, thus far, no great

¹ Cp. Edmund Hardy, *Zur Geschichte der vergleichenden Religionsforschung*. Published in the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*. Vol. i, pp. 45-66, 97-185, and 193-228. Leipzig, 1898.

² Cp. Thomas Achelis, *Abriß der vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft*. Sammlung (Göschel.) Leipzig, 1904.

³ Cp. Otto Pfeiderer, *Religion und Religionen*. München, 1906.

⁴ Cp. Raffaele Mariano, *Cristo e Buddha*. *Studi di Religione Comparata*. Firenze, 1900; Giuseppe de Lorenzo, *India e Buddismo Antico*. Bari, 1904 [2nd Ed. 1911]; Nicola Turchi, *Manuale di Storia delle Religioni*. Torino, 1912; Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*. Paris, 1909; George Foucart, *La Méthode Comparative dans l'Histoire des Religions*. Paris, 1909; Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*. 2 vols. Freiburg, 1887-9. [3rd Ed. Tübingen, 1906.]

difficulties have proved to be insurmountable barriers, viz. (1) the discovery of a conspicuous expert in this field, and (2) the discovery of arguments sufficiently persuasive to induce such a scholar to undertake the commission which friends may have urged him to accept. The case of the late Dr. Fairbairn, to mention but one illustration, supplies a striking instance in point. For many years, Dr. Fairbairn allowed his name to be coupled, in the prospectus of the *International Theological Library*, with the promise of a volume on Comparative Religion; and no announcement awakened more eager anticipations among the purchasers of volumes in that very able series than did the title of this long-awaited handbook. As a matter of fact, the treatise in question never appeared: and, even had Dr. Fairbairn's health continued good during the later years of his life, his exposition of Comparative Religion must still have remained an accomplishment of the future. Why? Because there is no consensus, as yet, touching the true frontiers of this subject. Furthermore, its relations to Anthropology, Ethnology, Mythology, &c., have still to be authoritatively determined. Even a prominent critic, whose contributions find admission to the columns of our foremost literary authority, allows himself to believe that "Comparative Religion" is a phrase which seems to have grown into use lately, to replace the old-fashioned "Science of Religions" introduced by Max Müller. Whether it means any more than the study of religions by the comparative method may be doubted.¹ Among those who really understand, 'Comparative Religion' is never to-day confounded with the 'Science of Religion'. These names are applied respectively to separate domains of research. Inasmuch, however, as the younger study of the two has only very gradually disengaged itself from its predecessor, and the transition has not even yet been completely effected, the need of a competent text-book in Comparative Religion has become in our day all the more manifest and imperative.

IV

It is quite a mistake then to say, as several reviewers have lately affirmed, that thoughtful people are now manifesting for the first time a deep and serious interest in this engaging new study. It has just been shown that, as a matter of fact, genuine interest in it can easily be traced throughout a period of fully two decades. Moreover, that interest has persisted, and increased, in spite of a long series of exasperating postponements. And the consequent hardship does not fall solely upon the readers of books; it makes itself felt among authors in an almost equally unpleasant manner. One manuscript, which has

¹ Cp. *The Athenaeum*. London, March 1, 1913.

existed in type-written form for several years past, has still to be withheld from publication,¹ owing to the continuous changes which are being made in the boundaries and subdivisions and technical vocabulary of the subject. It is little wonder, accordingly, that—when it was announced, twelve months ago, that two expositions of *Comparative Religion* were shortly to be issued—the very keenest expectation was instantly and widely aroused. The volumes were assured of a doubly cordial welcome because a considerable interval separated them from their most recent predecessors. In the remainder of this paper, attention will be concentrated upon these two latest publications,² whose appearance indeed has suggested the condensed historical record which has just been presented. *Comparative Religion* itself is not more manifestly the product of an evolutionary process than these attractive little primers are the natural and necessary fruitage of a dozen kindred undertakings of earlier birth.

V

It required courage, not less than competency, to face the task which the writers of these books had to essay. In less skilful hands, the consequences could not have been other than disappointing. Even as it is, it must be confessed that the results achieved are not wholly satisfactory: but the fault is to be found in the conditions by which the writers of these volumes were seriously handicapped, and not in any lack of qualifications on their part to discharge this enterprise aright. Each is admittedly a leading authority in this field. Each presents a summary exposition of the subject, couched in popular form, yet the first interpretations of a professedly scientific order that have ever been attempted. In point of learning, these little books leave nothing to be desired; Principal Carpenter, in particular, fairly revels in the marshalling of data of a marvellously comprehensive character. His illustrations, most delightful and abundant, are drawn from an amazingly wide acquaintance with the facts of religion, in all its multiform grades and manifestations. Only at the end of a long and studious life could one hope thus effectively to state and defend one's case; if in some instances the use made of an illustration may perhaps be open to question, the distinction due to a feat which has been very skilfully performed remains absolutely untouched and unrivalled.

But both authors laboured under innumerable disabilities. The

¹ Cp. L. H. Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Meaning and Value*. (In preparation.)

² Cp. Frank B. Jevons, *Comparative Religion*. (The Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature.) Cambridge, 1913. J. Estlin Carpenter, *Comparative Religion*. (The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge.) London, 1913.

supreme embarrassment of the situation lay in the fact that neither book was allowed to run beyond a limited number of decidedly small-sized pages. In this way, not only was the exacting nature of the task immensely increased, but anything like completeness of survey was rendered utterly impossible. Moreover, as already indicated,¹ it must never be forgotten that Comparative Religion is a science which is still in the making. Fully a score of its problems—some of which, admittedly, are fundamental problems—are still in process of settlement. Its legitimate scope and limits have not yet been finally agreed upon, even among its foremost representatives. It was a bold step indeed for a scholar, in such circumstances, to venture upon the preparation of a primer of this study. The consequent probabilities were twofold. If an author had previously written widely upon this subject, he was sure to be tempted to prepare a mere epitome of some larger work which he had already published. On the other hand, if he had not written a good deal previously upon this theme, both he and his readers would be in danger of simply wasting their time.

Professor Jevons's book, though so compressed, marks a distinct advance upon his *Introduction*.² The blemishes which marred that volume,³ while not indeed wholly excluded, are no longer conspicuously in evidence. The author does not persist in his attempt to define Comparative Religion as 'The Applied Science of Religion'; yet the influence of the earlier book appears and reappears throughout these smaller pages. The titles of the successive chapters recall it, while one detects traces of it also in the writer's somewhat apologetic attitude towards Christianity. Principal Carpenter, on the other hand, is plainly engaged in a piece of purely scientific inquiry. He exhibits an extraordinarily comprehensive breadth of view. He is perfectly calm, even when found in the shadow of an impending crisis. He shows no personal leanings, though he writes: 'The supreme expression of this [world-purpose], in religious literature, is found in the Christian Bible.'⁴ He regards Christianity as the summit of all preceding stages of evolution in religion; yet he also holds that 'no historic religion can ever claim finality'.⁵ The exposition which he supplies, moreover, is a good deal fuller than that furnished by Professor Jevons. Not only has he given us a hundred more pages of text, but the compositor has embodied his manuscript in a compact and closely-set type.

¹ Cp. pp. 1, 9, &c. See also p. 16.

² Cp. p. 6.

³ Cp. Louis H. Jordan, *Comparative Religion: A Survey of its Recent Literature*, pp. 15-18. Second Section, 1906-9. Edinburgh, 1913.

⁴ Cp. p. 249.

⁵ Cp. J. Estlin Carpenter, *Christianity and Comparative Religion*, p. 3. (A Lecture.) London, 1913.

VI

The point of view of these two writers is the same; that is the first fact deserving emphasis, for it possesses a special significance. An inescapable atmosphere pervades both of these volumes, literally from cover to cover. Everywhere one encounters the attitude and speech of the anthropologist. How is this coincidence to be explained? There is only one answer, and it marks how great is the gulf which separates us from the ideals of the late Professor Max Müller; the study of Anthropology has become the fashion of our times. Dr. Tylor set the ball rolling a generation ago: and Oxford to-day—under the inspiration of Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Jevons (a former Oxford man), Dr. Farnell, and Mr. Marett—is merely strengthening a growing tendency that has manifested itself widely among modern scholars.

The origin of religion, absolutely considered, is a theme with which the student of Comparative Religion has nothing whatever to do. Principal Carpenter is quite clear as to this fact, for he writes: 'These questions belong to the obscure realm of beginnings, in which various answers are possible.'¹ 'The beginnings of morality can no more be discovered historically than the beginnings of religion.'² 'It is for the anthropologist and the psychologist, *if they can*, to discover their origin.'³ 'The scope of Mythology, whatever may be its particular origins, &c.'⁴ In another passage he is especially explicit: 'Comparative Religion is not concerned with origins, and does not project itself into the prehistoric past, where conjecture takes the place of evidence. . . . The sphere of speculation has its own attractions: but, in this little book, an attempt will be made to keep to facts.'⁵

Nevertheless, both Dr. Jevons and Principal Carpenter are found continually busying themselves with the problems of the anthropologist; nor are they blameless of the charge that they sometimes indulge a fondness for sudden excursions into the realm of purely conjectural criticism.

1. On the one hand, an inquiry into the origins of particular religions has proved scarcely more fruitful, thus far, than an investigation of the origins of religion itself. There are some mysteries indeed, connected with the more rudimentary forms of religious belief and conduct, upon which Anthropology has thrown considerable light. It has enabled us to penetrate beyond certain barriers by which many hoped-for advances

¹ Cp. p. 187.

² Cp. p. 200.

³ Cp. p. 31.

² Cp. p. 198.

⁴ Cp. p. 174.

in knowledge have long been restricted, and for this assistance Comparative Religion frankly owns its indebtedness. Nevertheless, the greatest of these mysteries still remain unsolved. Of Primitive Religion, so-called, we know to-day practically nothing—notwithstanding the ingenuity of numerous anthropological philosophers. As Professor Foucart puts it: 'A la vérité, cette religion n'a jamais existé réellement, mais la ténacité subtile de ses fondateurs lui a communiqué une vie factice; d'aucuns l'estiment même un peu bruyante.'¹ But even had Anthropology been much more successful than it has proved to be in its attempt to determine the nature of man's earliest faith, Comparative Religion would still insist that the religious consciousness can best be studied in its highest and fullest expressions. Dr. Carpenter, in principle at least, recognizes the force of this contention when he writes: 'The history of religion is concerned with the process by which the great gods rise into clear view above the host of spirits filling the common scene, . . . with the manifold combinations which finally enable *one* supreme power to absorb all the rest.'² Dr. Fairbairn, in one of his latest volumes, delineated the situation admirably in the following forcible sentences: 'The attempt to find the origin and roots of religion—or to define and determine its function in history, and in the evolution of society—through the study of its meanest and most barbarous forms seems an altogether fallacious procedure. For religion is neither a peculiarity of the savage state, nor is it there that its social action can best be studied. . . . Like all things which do not die, its higher and more perfect forms are more significant of its real nature—and, therefore, of its actual source and cause—than any multitude of low forms or rudimentary types.'³

In a word, as it has elsewhere been emphatically affirmed,⁴ the dividing line between Anthropology and Comparative Religion must be drawn much more firmly and sharply than has been the custom hitherto. The pathways of these sciences, though for a considerable distance contiguous, are by no means the same. The major part of the data with which Anthropology busies itself has nothing whatever to do with religion—a subject with which Anthropology is only incidentally concerned. Yet to the anthropologist must be left the task of unravelling the origins of religion, whether in its general or in its particular forms. This quest makes high demands; it calls for the training and conscious

¹ Cp. George Foucart, *La Méthode Comparative dans l'Histoire des Religions*, p. 21. Paris, 1909. [New ed., 1912.]

² Cp. p. 108.

³ Cp. Andrew M. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 214. London, 1902.

⁴ Cp. Louis H. Jordan, *The Review of Theology and Philosophy*, p. 688. Edinburgh, May, 1913.

skill of an expert: and it can no more safely be entrusted to clumsy and incompetent oversight than the subsequent comparison of the materials which it supplies can be left in the charge of those who are inexperienced and unapt.

2. On the other hand, both of these primers are at fault in their readiness to introduce upon occasion a purely speculative element into questions that happen to come under debate.

Professor Jevons, as a representative anthropologist, has acquired the very natural habit of drawing inferences from his data. Such a course, in the sphere occupied by a teacher in that field, is entirely legitimate: indeed, in the present state of knowledge, it is often the only procedure that is possible. But Dr. Jevons goes too far when he writes: 'The History of Religions is limited to historical facts, and the inferences that can be drawn from them.'¹ Inductions based upon the findings of historical experts may constitute an 'Applied Science of Religion',² but they certainly have very little to do with Comparative Religion. If complacently tolerated, the opposite inferences drawn by different teachers would lead to endless confusion, and transform the study of Comparative Religion into a series of guesses. Inferences are at best merely shrewd conjectures, and conjectures are incompatible with the canons of any and every science. In particular, they are completely out of harmony with the task which Comparative Religion has in hand. Yet Dr. Jevons speaks of religions whose 'history is known to us from records and documents, or inferred by means of the comparative method'.³ 'The more probable conclusion, then, seems to be . . .'⁴ 'The presumption, therefore, afforded by the comparative method is . . .'⁵ 'We may reasonably conjecture . . .'⁶ 'We may not unreasonably conjecture . . .'⁷ 'From this the probable inference is . . .'⁸ Even Principal Carpenter, who disclaims any purpose to seek to uncover the actual beginnings of the various religious customs he has occasion to cite, cannot always rise superior to the temptation that so frequently besets him. 'They buried their dead with care,' he writes: 'and, though we can ask them no questions, we may infer with much probability. . . . Death is an element of universal experience, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that . . .'⁹ 'The Greek Hestia seems originally to have been . . .'¹⁰ He who 'infers' is almost certain, sooner or later, to find himself occupying the place of the willing or reluctant apologist.

¹ Cp. pp. 118-19.

² Cp. Frank B. Jevons, *An Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion*, pp. 2 f.

³ Cp. p. 21.

⁴ Cp. p. 59.

⁵ Cp. p. 99.

⁶ Cp. p. 20.

⁷ Cp. p. 28.

⁸ Cp. p. 98.

⁹ Cp. p. 91.

¹⁰ Cp. p. 122.

VII

It cannot be claimed, on the whole, that these latest expositions of Comparative Religion have proved as helpful as was generally anticipated. At the same time, the grudging praise they have received in some quarters is almost as surprising as the unappreciative dismissal in others. They are books of genuine worth, full of sound learning, and abounding in useful material. Many reviewers have ludicrously failed to detect their significance, and so have appraised them summarily in a single line or in a paltry paragraph. Because both belong to a series of manuals which are issued in sets of ten volumes at a time, there has been a disposition—much too frequently yielded to—to review each set in bulk. It is in large measure for this reason that the present sketch has been written, lest it should seem that the labour of two eminent specialists had been undertaken in vain.

Some have felt inclined to blame the authors of these books because much relevant information has unfortunately been omitted. But authorities adjudge the same situation differently: and, inasmuch as a very great deal of matter had perforce to be excluded, readers ought to have expected that the writers would be compelled to forgo the discussion of various topics to which, under other conditions, they would certainly have adverted. Whilst, however, some books of the *primer* species repel because they present only the bare bleached bones of a subject, these volumes disappoint because they are needlessly discursive. There is too much detail, and some of it is scarcely to the point. One misses getting at 'close grips' with the matter in hand. A primer, just because of its necessary compression, should confine itself very closely to the subject which it professes to expound; and there ought to have been no ground for the charge that Comparative Religion is here confounded at times with Anthropology, at other times with the History of Religions, and at yet others with Comparative Theology. It would have been an improvement, also, if references to citations could have been included, and if a few glaring evidences of haste had been detected and eliminated.

The chief criticism, applicable to these books, is that they are too exclusively introductory; they end before one arrives at a genuine exposition of the theme which they have embodied in their common title. A primer, to be sure, is 'introductory' in its aim: it should not be technical, either in its form or contents. On the other hand, especially in a series of brief handbooks of an unusually high standard, one would certainly not look for a treatment of the subject which was too elementary in character. What thoughtful people to-day are really anxious to know is: In what, precisely, does the study

of Comparative Religion consist? Is it really an 'affair of tentative theory, except when it is an affair of excitable ingenuity'? And what is its bearing upon the claims of this and that individual religion? For instance, what light (if any) has the study of Comparative Religion thrown upon the high traditional claims of Christianity? Such queries are timely, for they are awakening perturbation in many hearts at the beginning of this new century. It ought, therefore, to have been shown in concrete form wherein believers in the Christian religion, not less than believers in every other religion, must surrender the alleged uniqueness of many a venerated dogma, the unwarranted exclusiveness of many a religious community, and the dream that Heaven can be entered by only a single gateway.

At the same time, a really comprehensive work in this field is bound to have many predecessors: and each that is worthy assuredly hastens the longed-for consummation. These little books will doubtless lend valuable help in this connexion. That two such volumes, by two such authors, and published at so trifling a cost, should have appeared simultaneously, marks the beginning of a new era in the study of this new science. The very criticisms which these books have evoked—even where some of the critics seem totally unconscious of the measure of attainment which has actually been reached—will promote the same end. Nothing on this subject has appeared in English, thus far, which has achieved the same high standard; and this fact cannot fail to result, before long, in clearer and more harmonious conceptions touching a huge and but partially explored domain. Comparative Religion has undoubtedly received a strong new impulse, the force of which will not be expended for many a year to come. Much remains to be performed, but much has also been accomplished. The indirect products of these two brief surveys can, in truth, scarcely be over-estimated. Both of these primers are noteworthy in an eminent degree, and are really far more important than either their size or price serves to indicate. They are doomed of course, presently, to be superseded; but it is not too much to say that the results they are destined to effect will give them a permanent place in the early literature of this subject.

